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## ARLINGTON REDEVELOPMENT BOARD

Arlington, Massachusetts  
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DOCKET NO. 3665

Special Permit Under  
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN REVIEW

Applicant: JP Morgan Chase Bank NA, 1111 Polaris Parkway, Columbus, OH  
Property Address: 645 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

Date of Hearing: August 30, 2021, continued to September 27, 2021,  
and continued to January 24, 2022.  
Date of Decision: January 24, 2022

20 Day Appeal Period Ends: February 22, 2022

**Members  
Approved**

*Robert B. Klover*  
*Rachel Zimber*  
*[Signature]*

**Opposed**

*a. Infoc*

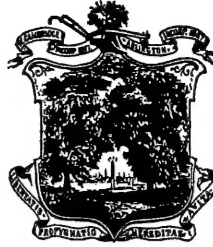
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Date

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**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
**Department of Planning & Community Development**  
730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

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**DECISION OF THE BOARD**

**Environmental Design Review Docket #3665**  
**645 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA 02474**  
**JP Morgan Chase Bank NA**

**January 25, 2022**

This Decision applies to the Special Permit application filed by JP Morgan Chase Bank NA, 1111 Polaris Parkway, Columbus, OH to operate a bank and replace the signage at 645 Massachusetts Avenue. The property is owned by Key West Realty LLC, 63 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02478. The project required a Special Permit to allow the use as a commercial bank branch with greater than 2,000 square feet in the B5 Central Business District, renovations to the building, install new signs, and alterations to the façade under Section 3.4 Environmental Design Review (EDR). The prior use was a restaurant, a use that has been at this location since at least the 1970s.

A public hearing was held on August 30, 2021, continued to September 27, 2021, and continued to January 24, 2022.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Cover letter to the Redevelopment Board from Attorney Robert Annese, dated January 18, 2022;
- Cover letter to the Redevelopment Board from Core States Group, dated January 14, 2022;
- Window and wall system specifications;
- Bike rack specifications;
- Proposed floor plan and renderings;
- Sign Submittal Package, prepared by Philadelphia Sign, dated June 17, 2021 and revised September 9, 2021;
- Exhibit A: letter from Joe McGuire, Chief Financial Officer of Not Your Average Joe's, dated March 18, 2020; and
- Exhibit B: letter from Joe McGuire, Chief Financial Officer of Not Your Average Joe's, dated May 29, 2020.

- Cover letter to the Redevelopment Board, dated September 18, 2021;
- Application for EDR Special Permit dated August 4, 2021;
- Project Narrative by Core States Group, dated July 28, 2021;
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans and Photographs, prepared by KMS, dated June 9, 2021;
- Dimensional and Parking Information Sheet;
- Parking Plan; and
- Quitclaim Deed dated September 7, 2007.

Application of Section 3.3 of the Arlington Zoning Bylaw:

**1. Section 3.3.3.A.**

A commercial bank of 2,000 square feet or more is allowed in the B5 Central Business District with a Special Permit under the jurisdiction of the ARB due to its location on Massachusetts Avenue. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**2. Section 3.3.3.B.**

The use and the upgrades to the building and site are in the public's interest. However, banking uses can be found throughout the immediate area in Arlington Center, including nine banks, lending institutions, and ATMs in Arlington Center.

The Board finds that this condition is not met.

**3. Section 3.3.3.C.**

The proposed location is in the heart of Arlington Center. Many customers are likely to access this location by foot, bicycle, or use on-street parking along Massachusetts Avenue, or park in the public municipal lot behind the structure. The use will not impair pedestrian safety any more than the prior restaurant use. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**4. Section 3.3.3.D.**

The bank does not have a high demand need for water or sewer. The use will not overload any public water, drainage or sewer system, or any other municipal system to such an extent that any surrounding use in the immediate area or in any other area of town will be unduly subjected to hazards affecting health, safety, or the general welfare. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**5. Section 3.3.3.E.**

All such regulations are fulfilled. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**6. Section 3.3.3.F.**

Multiple other banks are located within the vicinity and have had no detrimental impact on the integrity or character of the neighborhood, district, or adjoining districts,

or on the health and welfare of the community. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**7. Section 3.3.3.G.**

At present, there are nine different bank branches, lending sites, and ATMs in Arlington Center. The site of this proposed use is directly adjacent to another bank branch location. The prior restaurant use contributed to an active, lively streetscape in the afternoon and evening and provided meals tax income to the Town, neither of which can be said of the proposed use.

The Board finds that this condition is not met.

The following criteria have been met, per section 3.4 of the Arlington Zoning Bylaw:

**1. EDR-1 Preservation of Landscape**

The project site is developed, contains a multi-tenant building, and is entirely impervious. The landscaping around the perimeter of the site will remain in its current state.

**2. EDR-2 Relation of the Building to the Environment**

The existing storefront and entry will be renovated, and a second rear entry will be introduced. The existing gridded windows will be replaced with double-glazed, thermally broken, new aluminum frame windows with black anodized finished window frames, increasing the transparency of the ground floor. New signage will be introduced. Bench seating and planters are proposed for the Massachusetts Avenue facing façade. These updates will rehabilitate the existing storefront consistent with the style of the building and neighborhood.

**3. EDR-3 Open Space**

There are no changes proposed to the existing building site and currently no open space on the project site.

**4. EDR-4 Circulation**

The number of vehicle parking spaces will increase from zero to three. The new use requires eight spaces; therefore, the applicant has requested relief from the Zoning Bylaw parking requirement. The site is adjacent to available on-street parking along Massachusetts Avenue and the public parking in the Railroad lot. The ARB has jurisdiction to reduce the number of parking spaces required by the Zoning Bylaw.

The applicant has explored changes to the building to provide an ADA-accessible entrance at the rear of the building but has demonstrated that existing conditions prohibit their ability to improve accessibility to the rear entrance. The closest HP placard parking space to the main entry and ATM is in front of the Coldwell Banker property at 635 Massachusetts Avenue.

Related to bicycle parking, per Section 6.1.12(D) of the Zoning Bylaw, the applicant is required to provide one long-term and three short-term bicycle parking spaces. The applicant has proposed six short-term bicycle parking spaces on three "post and ring" style bicycle racks, exceeding the total parking spaces required by three. Two racks are to be installed along Massachusetts Avenue, and the third rack will be installed on David Lamson Way. The applicant proposes to provide one long-term bicycle parking space in a locked employee lounge accessible only by bank personnel. A Willworx Superstand will be installed in the lounge to comply with the Zoning Bylaw requirements.

**5. EDR-5 Surface Water Drainage**

There will be no changes to the exterior of the building or surface water run-off because of this proposal.

**6. EDR-6 Utilities Service**

There will be no changes to the utility service because of this proposal, which will affect only the interior of the building.

**7. EDR-7 Advertising Features**

The project site is in the Business Sign District. The proposal exceeds the total number of signs allowable by right. The applicant submitted a sign package with several primary and incidental signs proposed:

- One wall sign with illuminated channel lettering located over the main entrance measuring 20.7 square feet;
- One wall sign with illuminated channel lettering located on the David Lamson Way façade measuring 20.7 square feet;
- One wall sign with illuminated channel lettering located over the rear entrance measuring 12.7 square feet;
- Three (3) wall mounted regulatory signs in parking area measuring 2 square feet each;
- One ADA entrance plaque measuring 0.25 square feet; and
- One ADA directional sign measuring 0.45 square feet.

The existing awning will be removed and the sign band across the Mass Ave and David Lamson Way façades will be covered with a dark nickel metal panel three feet in height.

The applicant has requested more than the number of signs allowed and a larger area of signage than permitted in Section 6.2, Signs. Per Section 6.2.2(C), the ARB may grant a Special Permit to allow more than the number of signs allowed and signage more than the allowable area, "provided the architecture of the building, the location of the building relative to the street, or the nature of the use being made of the building is such that an additional sign or signs of a larger size should be allowed in the public interest."

Overall, the aggregate square footage of principal signage exceeds what is allowed per Section 6.2.1(D)(10) by 14.1 square feet, and incidental signage exceeds what is allowed per Section 6.2.1(E)(3) by 0.076 square feet. The applicant has not proposed any window signage. Any additional window signage or incidental signage would add to the excess of the six feet of allowed incidental signage.

**8. EDR-8 Special Features**

There will be no adverse impacts on light, air and water resources, or on noise and temperature levels.

**9. EDR-9 Safety**

The renovation of the space at 645 Massachusetts Avenue will conform to code requirements for safety and accessibility by emergency personnel and equipment.

**10. EDR-10 Heritage**

The building containing 645 Massachusetts Avenue is listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington* and is under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission. Any proposal approved by the Board would need further approval from the Arlington Historical Commission.

**11. EDR-11 Microclimate**

There are no proposed changes (new structures, hard surface, ground coverage, or machinery) that will impact the microclimate.

**12. EDR-12 Sustainable Building and Site Design**

The construction will be primarily indoors, and will prioritize energy efficient HVAC systems, plumbing fixtures, LED fixtures, and products incorporating low/no VOCs and recycled content.

As required by M.G.L. c. 40A, §9, a positive vote of at least four members of the Board is needed to issue a special permit. The Board moved Docket 3665 on January 24, 2022, resulting in denial (3 in favor, 1 opposed). The motion failed due to the following:

1. Special Permit criteria under Section 3.3.3(B): the Board found that the proposed use of a bank is undesirable to the public convenience or welfare.
2. Special Permit criteria under Section 3.3.3(G): the Board found that the introduction of another bank to Arlington Center would cause an excess of use detrimental to the character of the neighborhood.

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